Sara Nystrom

Mrs. Patterson

AP Lit Poetry Project Essay

3 April 2012

**Analysis of William Blake’s *The Tyger***

The poem I chose was *The Tyger* by William Blake. It was written during the Johnson Age also known as the Age of Sensibility. During this time in history, many people were beginning to question religion and the divine. Through his poem Blake asks most of the questions that were probably asked back then. He allows us into a time where people questioned creation, just as people today.

The speaker of *The Tyger* is most likely a man who was beginning to question where everything came from; whether there really is someone or something that is divine that created everything as we know it. He begins by saying who “could” create such a thing as a tiger? This is a hint for the audience that he probably does not believe in the divine at this moment in the poem. His audience however, is most likely right there with him. This was most likely intended to influence those of his time, only Blake did not realize that people would have this struggle with creation and how it became about until the 21st century. Therefore this poem’s audience is anyone who is questioning the divine and how creation came about. The speaker is writing from a first person point of view, which helps the audience to understand that they aren’t the only ones dealing with this dilemma. The topic does not only deal with the thought of creation but, who created us and if we were created then how could or why would they want to create both good and evil?

Just as they questioned the divine in the opening stanza it is clear to the audience that the tone of this poem will be inquisitive. Throughout the poem there are eleven questions which meanings range from: who created you to could he/she really created you and the lamb? Yet after the third stanza the speakers tone changes. It changes from inquisitive to challenging. After the third stanza the speaker is sure there is a divine person or thing out there, but he challenges whether he/she knew what he/she had created, when it created the tiger. He almost challenges the mindset of the divine who created both the tiger and the lamb.

Imagery also has a major part in describing the shift in tone. In the first three stanzas the speaker discusses the “distant deeps or skies”(5), “heart”(10), and “beat”(11). Through incorporating these words the speaker actually links what he is thinking to the poem. He ponders whether the tiger could have been made by something in the “distant deeps or skies”(5), yet he realizes how could they be alive had something not created them. While in the final three stanzas the speaker applies images such as: “stars threw down their spears”(20), “heaven with their tears”(21), and “furnace”(14). By employing these words the speaker depicts for the audience that he/she does believe in heaven and something beyond the stars that created us. That he/she has a mind like a “furnace”(14) that can accommodate a brain that could created such beings. The imagery also causes the audience to ponder how the divine could create such a powerful and terrifying tiger, yet still produce something as placid as a lamb. Thus the argument about how one could create both good and evil arises. With this argument comes the emotions of fear and awe. These images cause fear because if someone or something could create something so terrifying as a tiger what else could he/she create? Yet it inspires awe due to the fact that he/she had the ability and the knowledge to balance the spectrum and create something placid like a lamb. If he/she could create both, there is no knowing about what else he or she could create, which causes the audience to be in awe of the divine.

Anaphora also plays a part in creating these emotions. Through the repeated questions starting with “what” the audience is bombarded with the fear and amazement of what the tiger can do with its features. These questions bring up the heart, feet, shoulder, and eyes. By employing these questions right behind each other the speaker causes the audience to ponder what it took to create this beast and how amazing it is that he/she created it; yet still scary due to the fact that he/she could use their divine ability for evil. Also the repetition of the beginning stanza at the end depicts the shift in tone and belief from the speaker and the fact that the speaker is trying to resolve the rest of the issues he has with creation.

The rhyming scheme is aabbcc. This causes the reader to read slowly and carefully to try to figure out the meaning of the rhymes. Yet this can also cause the pace of the poem to pick up and be quick. Due to the quick manner of the poem, some believe it could be mimicking the fear that is produced about the abilities of the divine. Not only scared of the abilities the divine might have, but also fear of what the speaker may end up believing for himself/herself about the divine.

The theme of the poem is creation. The purpose of the poem is to get people to question creation. To question who created us, why they created us, why they created both good and evil. The speaker wants his audience to come up with their own questions and to figure out what they believe for themselves. The poem exemplifies the theme by questioning the creation of the Tyger and in contrast the Lamb.

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